

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Hendon 1

NOTHING is certain in this bewildering season of hope, fear and prayer.

Last Saturday morning, Wycombe Wanderers were Amateur Cup favourites and Isthmian title outsiders. By Tuesday evening, at soon after 9.10 p.m., their Wembley bid was over but that League championship once more looked nice and ripe for the plucking.

Such is the rapid, unpredictable way of life at the top.

SUTTON DROOP

Sutton United dropped their third point in two games when only drawing 1-1 at Tooting and Mitcham, while the Blues splashed out 90 minutes of action to claim an important home win over a strong Hendon outfit on Tuesday.

So from an uphill situation, six points adrift with only two games in hand following successive away draws at Enfield and Dulwich, Wycombe are back in there pitching—several degrees better off than they have been for many weeks.

Now five points adrift, they hold three extra games in reserve. But even with the programme already in its last quarter, that situation could just as easily deteriorate again as improve still further.

To put it mildly it was a little damp at Loakes Park for Hendon's visit. Heavy first half rain saturated the pitch; a spectacular deluge for all but the last few minutes of the second period turned it into a grass bottomed paddling pool.

UPRIGHT PROBLEMS

Under such circumstances, many players had their work cut out to keep upright.

Thus, as entertainment value, this clash of Isthmian honour rated highly indeed. Attacking venture from both sides helped pack more good, open football into the match than could reasonably have been expected.

For a time, it seemed to be developing into one of those

familiar affairs in which everything but goals is forthcoming. Events before Wycombe took the lead strengthened this theory.

Tony Slade, poking in the first real goal attempt of the night, was foiled by John Maskell (performing with renewed confidence after his unsteady Cup game) who pushed it around the post for a seventh-minute corner.

Three minutes later, back at Hendon's end of the field, Iain MacLean's free kick opened up a promising situation only for Geoff Anthony to produce a weak shot.

Blunt's toe trouble kept him on the sideline, while MacLean displaced Saturday's number three, Charlie Gale. The Scot's extra speed made all the difference in controlling Hendon's lightning right winger, Newton Ashman in the opening period.

Ashman, reserve team skipper at Claremont Road and formerly on Arsenal's books, rammed the ball across the goalface only to watch it rebound off a post in the 14th minute. But, lucky as this let off was for Wanderers, it was one of the very few times he slipped MacLean's attentions.

Hendon kicked off with a distinct disadvantage. Bobby Wilson and Johnny Wilson, their version of Larry Pritchard as a midfield man-cum-striker, were both unavailable, which left them with only one recognised sharpshooter in Johnny Baker.

To have gone at Wycombe the way they did took courage above and beyond the call of duty. The crowd appreciated it, and Wanderers, refusing to submit to any hangovers from Saturday, also responded.

Unfortunately, for quite a spell, the home attack seemed intent on blasting massive holes in the wall of Wycombe General Hospital, so high, hard and wild was their shooting.

Keith Searle and Ted Powell led the way in this side-contest, which left Wycombe on level terms until the 37th minute, when Micky Cooper brought down Tony Horseman to concede a penalty.

Horseman took the kick himself, sending international goalkeeper John Swannell completely the wrong way by stroking the ball along the ground to the right.

RECOGNITION

That goal, Tony's 38th of the season, put him alongside Searle again as leading striker. And as if in recognition of the fact, the rain suddenly stopped for the first time since the kick-off.

Until the interval Hendon's

defence, showed a nervous streak, but another, less blatant miss by Anthony kept the score static.

In fairness to Wycombe's Welshman — racing away with the title of the club's most unlucky player this season — he couldn't have prayed against any less suitable conditions than he met for his return.

As ever, Geoff gave 100 per cent, with little dividend to show for it all when Bernie Bremer replaced him near the end.

Both clubs included players who had turned out for the Olympic XI at Hillsborough 24 hours earlier. Pritchard, Powell and the less than fully fit Paul Fuschillo, all made the trip back South.

Fuschillo, who near full time on Tuesday picked up an extra foot injury, was obviously still hindered by his groin strain. Thus manager Brian Lee switched him to right back to glean whatever relief he could from the Loakes Park slope after half-time.

With rain pouring down again, Horseman rocked the visitors' crossbar after 52 minutes. Indeed, without laying too much blame on Tony for Saturday's failure, had he played then with the confidence he showed on Tuesday, it might well have been a very different story.

ANOTHER CHAPTER

The 60th minute added a further chapter to the Anthony saga, when Swannell luckily stuck his foot out on the line after Geoff had tricked him with a well intended shot.

Wycombe's extended period of control was climaxed in the 72nd minute by their second goal, put in by John Delaney after Anthony had nodded the ball down. Cooper, over the line in any case, could only transfer the shot further inside his net.

It was a personal triumph for Delaney in a match which brought together two of the most frequent scoring defenders in amateur soccer today, Micky Cannon always being worth a goal or two himself.

Rod Haider, Olympic marksman on Monday, added one for his club, with Alan Randall already on for Ashman, the deluge still going strong, and a linesman impatiently looking at his watch with fully ten minutes left to play.

Haider picked up possession some way from Wycombe's area, passed Anthony, who slipped yet again on the treacherous pitch, then went straight at the home defence. Maskell was drawn off his line, but not far enough, and the Hendon number six chipped his shot over the 'keeper's head.

CONSULTATION

Referee Teaves consulted a linesman before dismissing Wycombe claims for offside.

But Swannell finished under pressure, gallantly coming out to block Searle's and then parrying Barry Baker's effort off the line.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; P. Fuschillo, I. MacLean, E. Powell, J. Delaney, I. Rundle, G. Anthony (sub. B. Bremer, 84 mins), B. Baker, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman.

HENDON: J. Swannell; D. Hogwood, M. Cooper, P. Deadman, M. Cannon, R. Haider, N. Ashman (sub. A. Randall, 75 mins), M. Doyle, J. Baker, A. Slade, K. Jamieson.

Referee: Mr. K. E. Teaves (Oxford)

Attendance: 1,618

Half-time 1-0. Goalscorers: Wycombe—Horseman (37 pen), Delaney (72). Hendon—Haider (80).